

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bills will be placed on the calendar.

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this week a historic discussion began between Congress and the White House about the way forward in Iraq. On Wednesday, a meeting occurred between the President and congressional leadership following the President's veto of a spending bill that would have made America more secure, fully funded the troops, and changed the course in Iraq. It has taken almost 4½ years, but it appears the President finally is willing to consider what most Americans and Members of Congress have long known, that we must change course in Iraq and move toward a strategy that will make our country more secure.

It took 6 years and 3 months for the President to accept Congress as a co-equal branch of Government. Prior to last Wednesday, the President basically had ignored the constitutionally framed equal branch of Government, the legislative branch. From that perspective, it was a positive step forward.

During the first 6 years of this congressional term, the President basically ignored us. There was a big rubber stamp. Anything the Republican Congress thought the President wanted, they gave him. But yesterday, the minority leader and I met with the President's Chief of Staff Josh Bolton to further that discussion that started Wednesday in the White House. I thought the meeting was constructive, comfortable. It is clear, at this early point in the negotiations, that nothing is off the table. We agreed to meet again early next week. Meanwhile, I will be talking with members of my caucus, Senator McCONNELL, and with our experts, and we will continue to work on ideas for a way forward in the quagmire in Iraq.

I know many of my Republican friends in the Senate believe strongly that a change of course in Iraq strategy is needed, one that holds the administration and the Iraqis accountable for real results. I know many of my Republican friends intend to be part of that solution on the way forward. I look forward to working with them, as I have the last few weeks. Work is now in progress, and we will work to reach agreement on a bill that fully funds the troops while providing a responsible new course that makes America more secure and leads to an early end to America's involvement in the Iraq civil war.

Events on the ground give this challenge great urgency. The month of April saw an American death toll of more than 100, making it the deadliest month of the year for our troops in Iraq and one of the deadliest in the 51 months of this war.

The President's own Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction released his quarterly report last week-

end which painted a dispiriting picture of waste, ineffectiveness, and failure to achieve even minimally satisfactory results. Despite burning through most of the 20 billion American dollars planned for reconstruction, most Iraqis are without basic necessities such as electricity and clean drinking water. Only a third of Iraq's children are regularly attending school, and 70 percent are suffering from symptoms of trauma that will likely paralyze an entire generation on which we are counting to harvest the seeds of democracy.

Iraqi Prime Minister al-Malaki, a Shia, is accused of sabotaging efforts for peace and stability by firing some of the country's top law enforcement officials for doing too good a job of combating violent Shia militias. President Bush speaks of pressuring the Iraqi people to take responsibility for their own future. Yet while American troops are fighting and dying to secure the country, the Iraqi Government is planning a 2-month summer vacation.

We throw around a lot of numbers and statistics to highlight the failures and high stakes of the war. We must also remember that behind each of these numbers—104 deaths during the month of April—is a personal story.

Yesterday, a Las Vegas newspaper published an article about a 26-year-old Nevadan named John Shoup. After surviving 7 months in Iraq, John returned home to Nevada without apparent physical injury. Many of his friends were not so fortunate, he said. At home, though, almost immediately, John's wife Lori knew he was not well. She said:

I noticed in the first week he wasn't sleeping . . . he started to get a little snappy . . . he started crying and started throwing things.

John told his wife about the four roadside bomb attacks he survived.

The article goes on to say, among other things:

But the worst, [his wife] said, were the times he was called to bag up body parts of dead soldiers who had been blown up by improvised explosive devices on patrols ahead of his platoon . . .

With her husband displaying the same classic symptoms of PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, she checked him into a privately owned psychiatric hospital where he was treated for major depression related to [post-traumatic stress disorder].

He was given anti-depressants and while he was there, she said, his first sergeant called to inform him he would be listed as absent without leave and his paycheck for May would be canceled if he didn't report back to his squadron in Iraq, one of the many regular Army units whose tours had been extended.

Lori Shoup said her husband told the first sergeant about his battle with PTSD. The sergeant's response to him, she said, was: "How's that different from the way you normally act?" [She said] that really upset him. It was if they didn't care.

With his mental problems persisting, John Shoup met with doctors at O'Callaghan Federal Hospital at Nellis Air Force Base. Doctors there tried to help him, but on April 16, the day before he was supposed to report to Fort Drum, his condition took a turn for the worse. While at home, he took too many

drugs, described as a suicide attempt, and Lori had to rush him back to Nellis hospital. His stomach was pumped and he was put in supervised care.

He continues to struggle with his illness and now awaits another transfer from the hospital at Nellis Air Force Base near his home in Nevada to Walter Reed here in Washington.

We all know that war comes with casualties. I have talked about John Shoup. I have read quotes from Lori Shoup, his wife. She is also a casualty. She had to be hospitalized. She had a nervous breakdown.

Our soldiers have always shouldered the burden when the mission is to protect America's security. John Shoup did that.

What is our mission today? When he was asked that question, he replied:

All we do is drive around and wait to get blown up.

Our troops are interjected between warring factions, kicking down doors, trying to sort Shia from Sunni or friend from foe. Meanwhile, Afghanistan is deteriorating. Osama bin Laden remains at large, and al-Qaida is rebuilding its strength. Our current strategy is not a strategy for success. It is a recipe for more death and destruction, overburdening our military and leaving America less secure.

Today's USA Today newspaper talked about a lot of John Shoups. In fact, they said there are 150,000 brain injuries caused by what has happened in Iraq to our troops; 15,000 is what USA Today reports.

We approach these discussions with the White House with an open mind and sincere desire to move forward. But John and Lori Shoup and all Americans deserve to know what our resolve to change course in Iraq will be. Our course cannot be one to waiver from doing everything we can to get the President to change the mission, to transition the mission in Iraq. Fifty-one months of what has happened in Iraq has not been good for the country, certainly not good for the world.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the article from the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From reviewjournal.com, May 2, 2007]

IRAQ DEPLOYMENT CHANGED SOLDIER: POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER DELAYS RETURN

(By Keith Rogers)

When Army Spc. John Shoup came home on leave two months ago after serving seven months in Iraq, he wasn't the same man his wife, Lori, had known since they married four years ago. "We noticed he was very different," Lori Shoup said Monday, sitting on the porch of their Las Vegas condominium not far from where fighter jets take off from Nellis Air Force Base. I noticed in the first week he wasn't sleeping," she said. "He started to get a little snappy and stuff. . . . He told me he didn't want to talk about it."

Before his two-week leave was over, the nightmares and the horrifying memories of the so-called Triangle of Death in south

Baghdad had set in. "He started crying and started throwing things," she said about her 26-year-old husband from Frackville, Pa.

Little by little, though, the things he didn't want to talk about came to light. Among them were the four roadside bomb attacks that he survived but left some of his buddies wounded. But the worst, she said, were the times he was called to bag up body parts of dead soldiers who had been blown up by improvised explosive devices on patrols ahead of his platoon, a mortar troop of the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment from the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, N.Y.

With her husband displaying the classic symptoms of PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, she checked him into a privately owned psychiatric hospital where he was treated for major depression related to PTSD. He was given anti-depressants and while he was there, she said, his first sergeant called to inform him he would be listed as absent without leave and his paycheck for May would be canceled if he didn't report back to his squadron in Iraq, one of many regular Army units whose tours had been extended.

Lori Shoup said her husband told the first sergeant about his bout with PTSD. The sergeant's response to him, she said, was: "How's that different from the way you normally act?" That really upset him. It was as if they didn't care."

With his mental problems persisting, John Shoup met with doctors at O'Callaghan Federal Hospital at Nellis Air Force Base. Doctors there tried to help him, but on April 16, the day before he was supposed to return to Fort Drum, his condition took a turn for the worse. While at home, he took too many drugs described as a suicide attempt, and Lori had to rush him back to the Nellis hospital. His stomach was pumped and he was put in supervised care.

In the meantime, Lori has been struggling to make ends meet by continuing to work as a bartender at a cantina on the Strip while caring for their 3-year-old son, Levan, and her 8-year-old daughter, Emily, from a previous marriage. "I'm at wit's end," she said. "There's no way I can do it all by myself."

Her father, Joseph Godlewski, a retired Army staff sergeant, has been trying to help with babysitting. He is also helping his daughter understand what John is trying to endure. "The poor kid has seen so much death," he said. "Once the smell of death is in your nose it never goes away."

For Lori, the gravity of the situation became too much last week, when she experienced a nervous breakdown that resulted in a trip to the Nellis hospital emergency room. Now back at home, she was feeling better Monday even though she learned that John's status with his overseas unit had officially changed to AWOL while he's still at the federal hospital. His paycheck had not been deposited. "I couldn't believe it. My heart went right down into my stomach," she said.

In a telephone interview from his hospital room, John Shoup said he had served his four-year obligation but his orders had been extended. He said his first sergeant had called him to say he had "better hurry up and stop fooling around and get back to Iraq." "All we do is drive around and wait to get blown up," he said. "I just want to get back to the Army and get out and get back to my family."

On Tuesday, a spokesman at Fort Drum acknowledged that John Shoup had called the fort to say he needed mental help. They directed him to the Nellis hospital to continue PTSD treatment until he was well enough to return to Fort Drum. "Then they would make a determination if his future is best not serving in the Army," Fort Drum spokesman Ben Abel said.

Given the current circumstances, Abel said he could not foresee the Army sending him back to Iraq. As for stopping his pay, that was a misunderstanding that stemmed from his overseas unit, Abel said, noting, "It's on its way to being cleared up."

Lori Shoup said, however, that her husband won't be returning to Fort Drum immediately. Instead, he will be transferred today from the Nellis hospital to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

In the meantime, she wants to see "all of our boys come home" from Iraq. "I believe our job is done there. . . . I believe that our troops are doing a lot of good there. I back our soldiers 100 percent. I've heard it referred to as a modern-day Vietnam. "It's getting uglier and uglier. It's really unfortunate because our society is going to suffer from it because there's a lot of fathers and sons and brothers who will never return. And some will never return the same people they were when they left."

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

YOUTHS AND FIREARMS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, often discussions about combating gun violence center around preventing criminal access to dangerous firearms. Another important component of the issue is the ability of our children and teenagers to access firearms. Most fatal firearm incidences occur when children and teens discover loaded and unsecured firearms in their homes. Over the years, accidental shootings and suicides have claimed the lives of thousands of young people. Sadly, many of these tragedies could have been prevented through common sense gun legislation.

On April 14, two 14-year-old boys were playing in one of their homes in Iosco Township, MI, when they found an unlocked .45-caliber handgun. After playing with it for a short time, the gun went off. The two boys were home alone, so no adult was aware of what happened until one of the boys called 911 and uttered the words, "I shot him." The other boy was pronounced dead after being airlifted to the University of Michigan Medical Center.

The very next day not far away in Battle Creek, MI, a 19-year-old accidentally shot and killed his 17-year-old best friend and cousin. The two were sitting on a couch in the living room, playing with an unregistered gun. They had removed the gun's clip but were not aware of the single bullet remaining in the chamber.

These are two examples of the misery gun violence can inflict. The Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention have released some staggering statistics on gun-related deaths among young people:

In 2002 a child or teen was killed in a firearm-related accident or suicide every 9 hours.

On average, four children died every day in non-homicide firearm incidents between 1999–2002.

From 1997–2002, more than 1,324 children were killed in firearm accidents.

In 2004, 13,846 kids were injured by a firearm.

Over the last 10 years, an average of 1,213 kids committed suicide with a firearm each year; on average more than 135 each year were under the age of 15.

The overall firearm-related death rate among U.S. children under the age of 15 was nearly 12 times higher than among children in 25 other industrialized countries combined.

As adults, parents and grandparents, we have a responsibility to protect our children from gun-related deaths. Trigger locks and other sensible gun safety measures can have a significant impact. I urge my colleagues to wait no longer to act on such measures.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IN MEMORY—ARTHUR H. GUENTHER, PH.D.

• Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, today I note the passing away of Dr. Art Guenther on April 21, 2007.

Art Guenther was born April 18, 1931, in Hoboken, NJ. As a kid he loved the outdoors and became New Jersey's youngest Eagle Scout. He wanted to be a forest ranger and hoped to attend a college with a good forestry program, but those schools didn't accept out-of-state students. A teacher had noticed Guenther's aptitude in math and science and got him into Rutgers. There he majored in chemistry, earning his bachelor's degree in 1953.

As a grad student at Penn State, he wanted to pursue optics. His thesis advisor asked, "Why optics? The cream is gone," meaning all the good research had been done. Guenther persisted, receiving his Ph.D. in chemistry and physics in 1957. He joined the Air Force and was sent to Kirtland Air Force Base. His mother wondered why they were sending him out of the country on his first assignment. After serving 2 years, he left the Air Force and became a civilian employee and a New Mexican for the remainder of his life. His optics work would pay off in 1960, after the laser was first demonstrated. As the only person at Kirtland with a background in optics, Guenther was asked by the commander of the research directorate to evaluate lasers for potential Air Force use. He toured the country and reported back on the promise of the new technology. At the request of the Air Force, he established a laser program and later became chief scientist of the Air Force Weapons Lab, a